

CARLUCCI's statement before the HSCA, 11 December 1978
[Public Hearing]

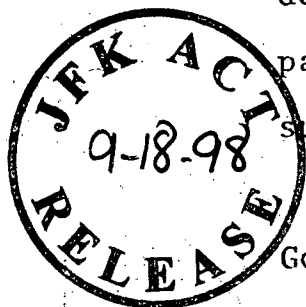
CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE IN FULL 1998

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

It is a privilege to appear before you in these hearings. I believe, as I think you do, that exhaustive and objective investigations of the tragic assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and the Reverend Martin Luther King can make a contribution to history and resolve the nagging doubts that have been created and kept alive over the past fifteen years. We in CIA have tried to be fully supportive.

You have asked me to speak to the future, and how the Government should act in the event of a future assassination of a major public figure. For CIA's role in such an eventuality, I should speak against the background of what CIA is, and what its responsibilities and capabilities are. This seems appropriate, for despite all the publicity over the past few years, the public still has something less than a perfect picture of the Agency.

It must be remembered that CIA was created following World War II, at the beginning of what came to be known as the Cold War. In addition to its role of collection and analysis of intelligence, CIA was tasked immediately to perform a range of activities for which there was no real precedent and for which no clear terms of reference were available. This was part of an unprecedented period of



CIA HAS NO OBJECTION TO
DECLASSIFICATION AND/OR
RELEASE OF CIA INFORMATION
IN THIS DOCUMENT

American initiatives and leadership in the free world. For its part, CIA was required to involve itself in programs aimed at countering various organized Communist subversions then plaguing Western governments and institutions. This part of its mission involved a wide range of clandestine activity unfamiliar to most Americans.

The normal process of evolution has worked its way within the Agency over the years. The resulting changes should be viewed in the context of change itself. The CIA is a dynamic organization and one of its strengths has always been its responsiveness to new requirements and Governmental direction. Today's CIA is very different than the CIA as it was originally created; it is also very different than the CIA of four or five years ago.

From within it is not difficult to recognize the many and varied talents in the organization. It has been difficult, however, to convey to the public a balanced picture of the Agency, because of the necessary secrecy that surrounds much of what it does. Our analytical side is usually ignored. But the CIA in many respects resembles a university. Its scholarly researchers, specialists in many walks of life, and its creative scientists and technicians constitute a remarkable national resource. I like to think that this has been made clear often enough to be generally recognized, but

I am afraid this is not the case.

It is in the world of clandestine operations, which so few have a basis for judging, that it has been particularly difficult for the media and the public to develop a balanced appreciation of CIA's activities. It is often said that our successes in this work cannot be described, and that is as it should be. It also has been said that our failures are called out from the roof tops, and indeed they have been; but not everything that is controversial has necessarily been either wrong or a failure, and some public treatment has not discriminated between the two. Yet success in clandestine operations depends to a great degree on secrecy. Not only must the operations be conducted with good security at the time they occur, but those engaged in them must be unidentified as well. And that anonymity must be extended into the future, both to preserve the services of the individuals involved, and to protect them from bodily harm. Were we to make a practice of exposing them, this would come to work against our ability to gain such future cooperation.

Secrecy extends into the offices of researchers and analysts as well. While it is no secret that CIA has a large group of researchers and analysts, much of the information with which they work comes from highly

sensitive sources that must be protected. While unclassified reports can be and are produced, much of the report production must bear high security classifications. Quite frankly, if we did not protect these sources we would lose them. Each such loss contributes to the blinding of our policy-makers.

Operational and source security traditionally have been central features of successful intelligence throughout the history of mankind. The importance of these considerations is recognized in our own laws, the National Security Act of 1947 making the Director responsible for protection of intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure. The shorthand phrase "protection of sources and methods" is central to the conduct of the business of intelligence, both by reason and by force of law.

This Committee has an outstanding record on this score. We have not been plagued with dangerous leaks that expose valuable resources abroad or, for that matter, that do us damage in the areas in which we must operate.

You have recognized our common responsibility of maintaining the balance between necessary secrecy and the openness of a free society. We have extended access to your Committee to many inner secrets, knowing that

these -- the public's secrets -- will be kept, while the broad story can still be told.

This special requirement of security on the part of the CIA must be kept in mind, as it will constitute a very real consideration in decisions of how to conduct any future such inquiry as yours, should the occasion arise. It also bears heavily on our ability to gather the information that can and has saved the lives of our public officials.

It also should be pointed out that CIA seldom conducts investigations in the normal sense. Its employees abroad are under cover, not openly acknowledged as CIA. Their sudden conversion to police-type investigators in some future inquiry, moving about overtly in a foreign jurisdiction, would not only involve them in the use of techniques not regularly a part of their professional practice, but it would compromise their ability to perform for long at that location as well as elsewhere abroad in the future. The point is that CIA ordinarily does not carry out its intelligence operations as policemen or detectives. Its approach is to focus rather sharply on selected intelligence targets, which are approached clandestinely. The only persons in the Agency who really engage in regular investigative work are security officers conducting background investigations on individuals in order to clear

them for access to classified information.

It is in this context that I respond to your request as to what the actions of CIA should be in the event of a future assassination of a major ^{public} political figure. I will not try to predict what kind of an assassination may occur, at what level of public importance, with what international implications. The range of resulting situations will vary so that what is done should depend very much on the circumstances at the time.

So far as the role of CIA is concerned, in any assassination inquiry, its jurisdiction is that of foreign intelligence, subject to Presidential directive and Congressional review. The Agency is restricted by Executive Order in what it can do within the United States, and more specifically is proscribed by law from having any law enforcement role. These considerations, in addition to those of security, will impact directly on the role of CIA in the event of future assassinations.

By far the most important thing CIA can do in the sordid business of assassinations is to help prevent them. Our ability to do this depends on maintaining a network of dedicated and talented people throughout the world. They engage in out-of-the-ordinary endeavours, at some

personal risk, on unusual subject matter. They do not have the satisfaction of sharing their experiences with their families; there are some families that do not even know the true employment of the head of the household. You would have to look very far indeed to find such a collection of dedicated public servants. So far as CIA's contribution is concerned, they would carry the load.

All of our people are instructed to be alert to assassination plots. Any CIA officer who learns of the planned assassination of a public figure would report it immediately. In the case of Americans the information is passed directly to the Secret Service. There are public figures alive in this world today who have CIA to thank for it. Further, in an age of organized terrorism, we have been able to learn of plots that would have resulted in the death of innocent private citizens and have been able to cause actions that saved their lives. Security considerations forbid me to do more than allude to it.

I must emphasize that the ability of CIA to find its way to the shapeless secrets in the dark world of terrorism and violence is a chancey and risky business. It depends on many things. To the extent that we can gain and hold the confidence of individuals who will report to us what terrorists and assassins are doing, we increase our

chance of learning such things. To the extent that we must reveal our sources and jeopardize the lives and safety of those who work for us, our chances for succeeding are reduced.

Whenever we discuss intelligence sources, it involves the lives of people who are willing to trust our ability to protect them. If the word goes out that CIA does not protect those who work for it, it will directly affect our ability to do the job that we are supposed to do. Private individuals who have worked for us, and still do would come to fear to continue to do so. Further, the security and law enforcement organizations of foreign governments may also come to doubt our reliability. This in fact is already happening. To what extent, I cannot say, since you can never know how much information you don't receive. But we detect a clear lessening of confidence in us on the part of our agents and friendly services with whom we work. As a part of the inherent philosophical tension in having a secret organization in an open society, there can be grave problems in over-exposure and destruction of the very thing the United States Government has the right to expect from an organization such as CIA.

What considerations would affect CIA if there was an assassination of a President?

First, there may be international implications. Were such an event to occur again, CIA would--as it did following the assassination of President Kennedy--institute a world-wide intelligence alert. The murder of the President may have serious implications for the national security of the United States, well beyond the tragedy of the act itself.

As we did following the assassination of President Kennedy, we would levy general requirements for reporting of any information that bears on the subject. This would be followed, if appropriate, by more specific requests.

After the first alert, the question would be whether the assassin (and where there is more than one, his colleagues) had any international connections. On this question there would be certain things that CIA would do automatically. It would check its files for any possible indications of foreign connections on the part of the assassin. It would approach the police and security organizations in those countries where it has connections to ask for advice and assistance. In terms of past capabilities our performance in this respect should be good. Beyond this, the various established intelligence sources can be queried for any information that they may have.

In the case of Lee Harvey Oswald, CIA was able to obtain information on his travel back to the United States from the Soviet Union, as well as being able to produce limited information about his contacts with Soviet and Cuban officialdom during his brief visit to Mexico a month and a half before the assassination of the President. While there was reporting of reactions around the world, there was not much directly on Oswald. As one CIA report stated it, during the original inquiry, other information on Oswald from abroad was limited "partly...by the facts of Lee Oswald's life." Obviously, if there is no information we will find none. If it exists, but is well concealed, we may be unable to come by it.

Up to this point I have been discussing the considerations affecting how CIA, as a unit, would function. Of course others would be involved as well, circumstances determining the approach.

Were there to be an assassination abroad, an important part of the problem would be political. The United States Government, at a diplomatic level, could seek assistance from the domestic law enforcement and security agencies of

the country where the incident occurs. CIA and the FBI could share in this in some way, the division of effort depending very much on circumstances difficult to predict.

The assassination of President Kennedy--inside the United States--involved CIA in something of a limited supporting role. The things that were known and seemed at that time to bear on the assassination were reported. In the event of a future assassination inside the United States, CIA's role would depend on a number of considerations. After the initial actions that might be taken if the victim was the President, there may be no investigation at all. Say the assassin was a disgruntled office-seeker in an open-and-shut case. In any event, if the assassin survives, special considerations must be taken into account. Without reference to any problems that might arise in the use of specially sensitive information in his trial, any such inquiry such as yours would have to be conducted in such a way as to protect his right to a fair trial.

In the event of an assassination of a major domestic figure, without implications of an international nature, CIA is unlikely to find itself involved in any material degree. If there were unexpected international ramifications, the Agency would, of course, probably have some role.

If a foreign political figure falls victim to an assassin in the United States, the complications would be multiplied. Just consider. If our President were killed

abroad, we would want some role in the inquiry. But to what extent would we accord similar treatment to foreigners whose motives may differ from ours?

There could be a wide range of possible situations in which CIA might not be involved at all, or even peripherally. If we are tempted to try and design a standard approach for the future, that consideration should give us some pause.

I believe that we should not try today to structure tomorrow's investigation. I feel that our representative society must trust our elected officials then to exercise the best judgment of the moment. It is all too tempting to make judgments on past events in the light of changed perceptions and standards. It is not so simple to determine a future plan that would have to function under circumstances that we cannot predict. Rather than imposing some rigid approach on future officials, I would favor providing them with general guidance and allowing them flexibility to respond to the exigencies of the moment.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my prepared statement. I am now prepared to respond to your questions.